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SPECIAL EDITION

WITH A TRACK-BY-TRACK
REVIEW OF THE ALBUM

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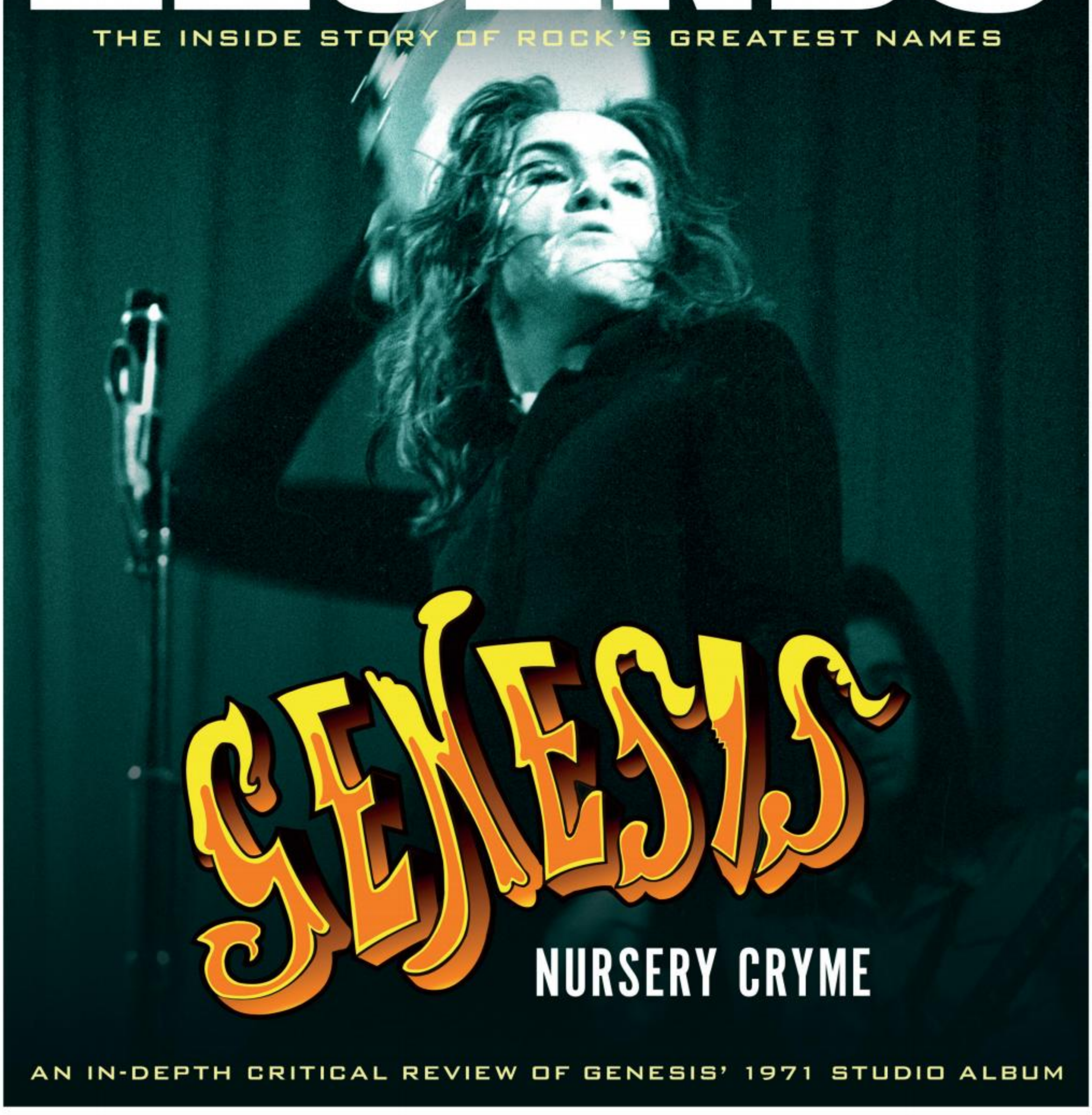
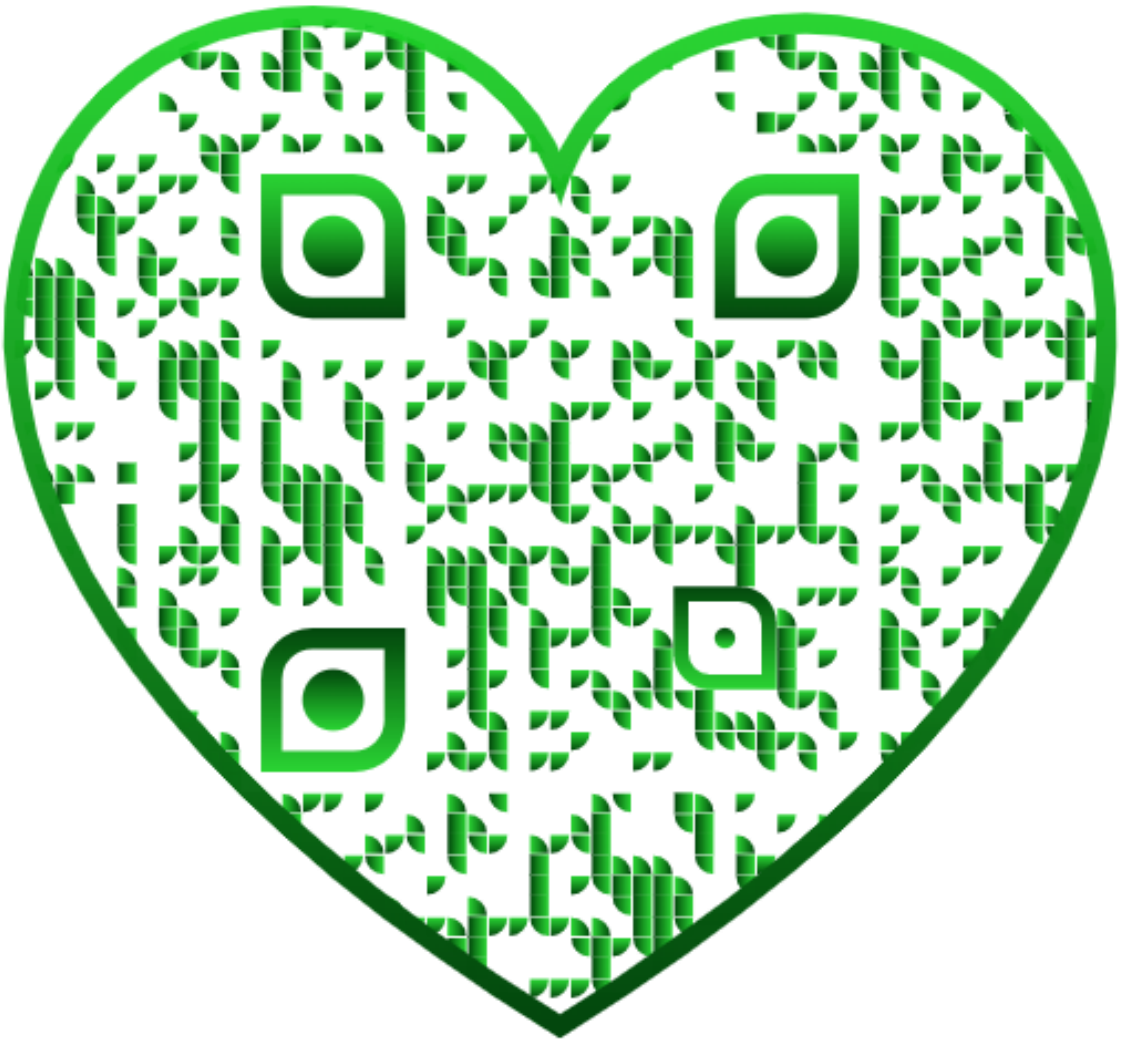


GENESIS

NURSERY CRYME

AN IN-DEPTH CRITICAL REVIEW OF GENESIS' 1971 STUDIO ALBUM



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NURSERY CRYME

By 1971 Genesis were now firmly on the road to stardom, they were working on a strong studio album and had secured their necessary line-up changes. This album was *Nursery Cryme*, their third studio album, and the first to feature drummer/vocalist Phil Collins and guitarist Steve Hackett.

Steve joined the band after placing an ad in *Melody Maker* that was answered by Peter Gabriel. After an in-home audition with Hackett's brother John accompanying him on flute, Gabriel famously hired Hackett on the spot, as Steve recalled: 'I advertised in an English paper, "*Imaginative guitarist/writer seeks involvement with receptive*

musicians, determined to strive beyond existing stagnant music forms. Steve 730 2445 – Melody Maker, 12 December 1970."

'Peter phoned me up and I went along to see them at a gig and they had just replaced Anthony Phillips, he was on *Genesis to Revelation* and *Trespass*, and they had a guy they weren't really happy with, they had auditioned the wrong people and they were getting fed up so they ended up accepting someone they weren't really happy with and I went to see them and I could see why they weren't really happy with him and I felt he seemed to be the weak link, so I did two weeks rehearsals with them and we played our first gig.'

The transition was not a totally smooth one, as Genesis were long-time friends and were well rooted in their own eccentricities. However Hackett eventually found a creative spark as a guitar-playing collaborator with keyboardist Tony Banks, as Banks told *Ultimate Classic Rock* in 2015. 'I will say, being in the band with Steve, who is also very masterful with the guitar and could get lots of different sounds with it, the combination of the two of us produced some combinations that were kind of unusual. When someone got excited about something, we would react by playing along to it. That was the way we used to work. I think it is okay to say that Steve and Phil did not really feel up to that, particularly in the early days. They were the new boys, after all, while the three of us were something of a clique.'

The addition of Phil Collins to the band was also an incredibly important pivot in Genesis' career trajectory; his passion and virtuosity brought a fire to the band that had previously been missing. 'Something definitely changed when Phil joined the band,' singer Peter Gabriel has said. 'He was a real drummer – something I had never been too convinced of with Chris Stewart and John Mayhew.' Phil himself has always been slightly more self-effacing in his recollections of this time: 'When I first joined the band I was viewed as class clown because I was a scapegoat in a way, which is fine because a drummer's role is very defined. It's like a goalkeeper, he is

there to really present the vibe, you give the band the energy with the playing on the drums and if you give a bit of humour and personality to that vibe then the band will bounce off it. It's amazing how a bit of humour can divert huge arguments.'

Following extensive touring in support of their previous album *Trespass*, the band began writing and rehearsing for a follow-up in Luxford House, East Sussex, with recording following at Trident Studios. *Nursery Cryme* saw the band take a more aggressive direction of some songs, with substantially improved drumming.

The record was released in November 1971 on Charisma Records. The album received a mixed response from critics and was not initially a commercial success; it did not enter the UK chart until 1974, when it reached its peak at No. 39. However, the album was successful in Continental Europe, particularly Italy. At approximately thirty-nine minutes long, it was the shortest studio album yet.

The five moved to Charisma owner Tony Stratton-Smith's residence, Luxford House, a Sixteenth Century Grade II listed building in Crowborough, East Sussex, which the group nicknamed the house 'Toad Hall'. Genesis was apprehensive about writing without Phillips, and both Collins and Hackett were unsure of what level of musical contributions they would be able to make. Hackett was keen to explore new sounds and musical ideas, and suggested the group buy a Mellotron, which Banks used as his main instrument, along with the Hammond organ, instead of the piano. Some material had been written when Phillips and Mayhew were still in the band, and was reworked by the new members. Collins proved a particular workaholic and was happy to jam with anyone at any time.

With the new material worked out, Genesis recorded *Nursery Cryme* at Trident Studios in London in August 1971 with John Anthony as their producer and David Hentschel their assistant engineer who, like Anthony, had worked the same role on *Trespass*.

The album features Hackett playing a Les Paul guitar which the band had bought him along with a Hiwatt stack amplifier. He recalled some difficulty in understanding what Banks and Rutherford were talking about as the two had devised their own sayings, for instance a passage that they had played was referred to as a 'nice guy'.

As an acoustic producer, John Anthony is second to none. The separation and definition he achieved on Lindisfarne's first Charisma offering exceeded anything that Bob Johnston produced for them. *Trespass* is a great album but Genesis wanted to move on, making more impact and they felt that Anthony would not be suitable. 'If you've got a very thick sound and the drummer's loose and very deep and not loud enough, then it's just going to sound well, it's not going to grab anybody at all,' was drummer Phil Collins' opinion.

With both *From Genesis to Revelation* and *Trespass*, Genesis had clearly established a musical identity that was unmistakably romantic in its outlook. The music was also romantic not just in terms of its subject matter and melancholy reflective mood, but also in its actual romantic styled structure. This was genuine romantic music which among musical circles fell into the definition of 'orchestral', in that the music was infused with big broad expansive melodies harking back to the nineteenth century works of the romantic school of composers.

With pieces like *The Fountain of Salmacis*, the subject matter of *Nursery Cryme* looked back to the classical world of Ancient Greece. The band had matured hugely since the days of Jonathan King, and with lines concerning nurses who would 'tell you lies of a kingdom beyond the skies', Genesis were shaking off any remaining uncertainties over the ambiguity of the name and making it clear for the few remaining doubters that their outlook was strictly secular. Clad in its disturbingly ambiguous sleeve by Paul Whitehead there was no danger of *Nursery Cryme* being consigned to the religious section.

A track-by-track review of

NURSERY CRYME

by Hugh Fielder & Friends

Hugh Fielder (Esteemed Rock Journalist and Author): Released in November 1971, *Nursery Cryme* was a critical album for Genesis – not only did the band have to fulfil and develop the promise evident on the warmly received *Trespass* but they had to do so without one of their key composers and founding members, Anthony Phillips.

Phillips had left following the recording sessions, having found the rigours of touring the UK on a shoestring budget and the harsh realities of operating on a continuous basis within a band framework too much to bear. He went on to study composition at the Guildhall School of Music before returning to the rock world with the release of his first solo album *The Geese and the Ghost* in 1977.

For a band as unique as Genesis, finding a new guitarist was not going to be an easy task. There are countless guitarists with some skill and the ability to tear through blues licks, but what Genesis needed was someone sympathetic to their music and able to contribute compositional and textural ideas.

They found their man in Steve Hackett who, despite having next to no professional musical experience, impressed the band with his musical ideas and technical abilities. That Hackett was influenced by Robert Fripp of King Crimson doubtless stood him in good stead, as *Court of the Crimson King* was an acknowledged influence on the band.

Another key event at the time was the decision by the band to replace drummer John Mayhew with Phil Collins. Where Mayhew adequately provided the band with quite basic drumming, the newcomer brought a level of skill and inventiveness far in excess of his years and experience. With Collins in the driving seat the music immediately had real dynamics and swing. He was also an

accomplished vocalist. Collins' addition to the band was probably equally as important on the personality side. Not only did he help lighten the mood in what was a very serious group of people but, with his professional acting experience, he was not afraid of being on a stage. At this time Banks, Rutherford and Hackett all sat down in a most un-rock 'n' roll fashion, leaving Gabriel as the sole visual focus and communicator with the audience. Collins was immediately able to support Gabriel with vocals, humorous exchanges and general stage presence.

Rob Corich (Author, Engineer and Record Producer): *Nursery Cryme* as an album, now over thirty years later when you go back and listen to the early Genesis albums, I think it is one of the most listenable of the Gabriel albums.

Malcolm Dome (Veteran Journalist and Founder of TotalRock Radio): The jump from *Genesis to Revelation* to *Trespass* was enormous stylistically, a very big change in direction. The jump from *Trespass* to *Nursery Cryme* was equally as big if not bigger but it wasn't a stylistic jump. It was a jump in terms of honing down what they were all about, it was maturing, it was developing, it was fascinating and it was absolutely brilliant.

The Musical Box

The Musical Box was a lengthy piece that described a macabre story placed in Victorian Britain. The song originated when Phillips was in the group and would often write with Rutherford on twelve-string acoustic guitars. The latter had begun to experiment with unorthodox guitar tunings and had the top three strings tuned into F sharp which provided the jangly sound heard in the opening and the chord that signalled the start of the electric guitar solo. The tuning influenced the title of an acoustic piece, *F#* (pronounced 'F sharp') that became the basis of *The Musical Box*, which was

developed further after Phillips's departure. The opening section of the song features both Rutherford and Banks on twelve-string.

The guitar solos originated from Barnard's brief tenure in Genesis. Hackett modified sections that Phillips and Barnard had written while adding his own arrangements to the song. He realised that neither member had made a sound that resembled an actual musical box, so he took the opportunity to record a guitar lick that is heard before the lyric 'Here it comes again'. Gabriel, a big fan of The Who at the time, pushed for Rutherford to come up with a 'ballsy, attacking' section in a similar style to their guitarist Pete Townshend. Gabriel incorporated themes of violence and sex into the lyrics. Collins was inspired to play a rolling drum part during the middle section from hearing *The Weaver's Answer* by Family, and put it to the rhythm. 'All of a sudden', speaking about *The Musical Box* at this point, 'It's "Wahey we're off!"'

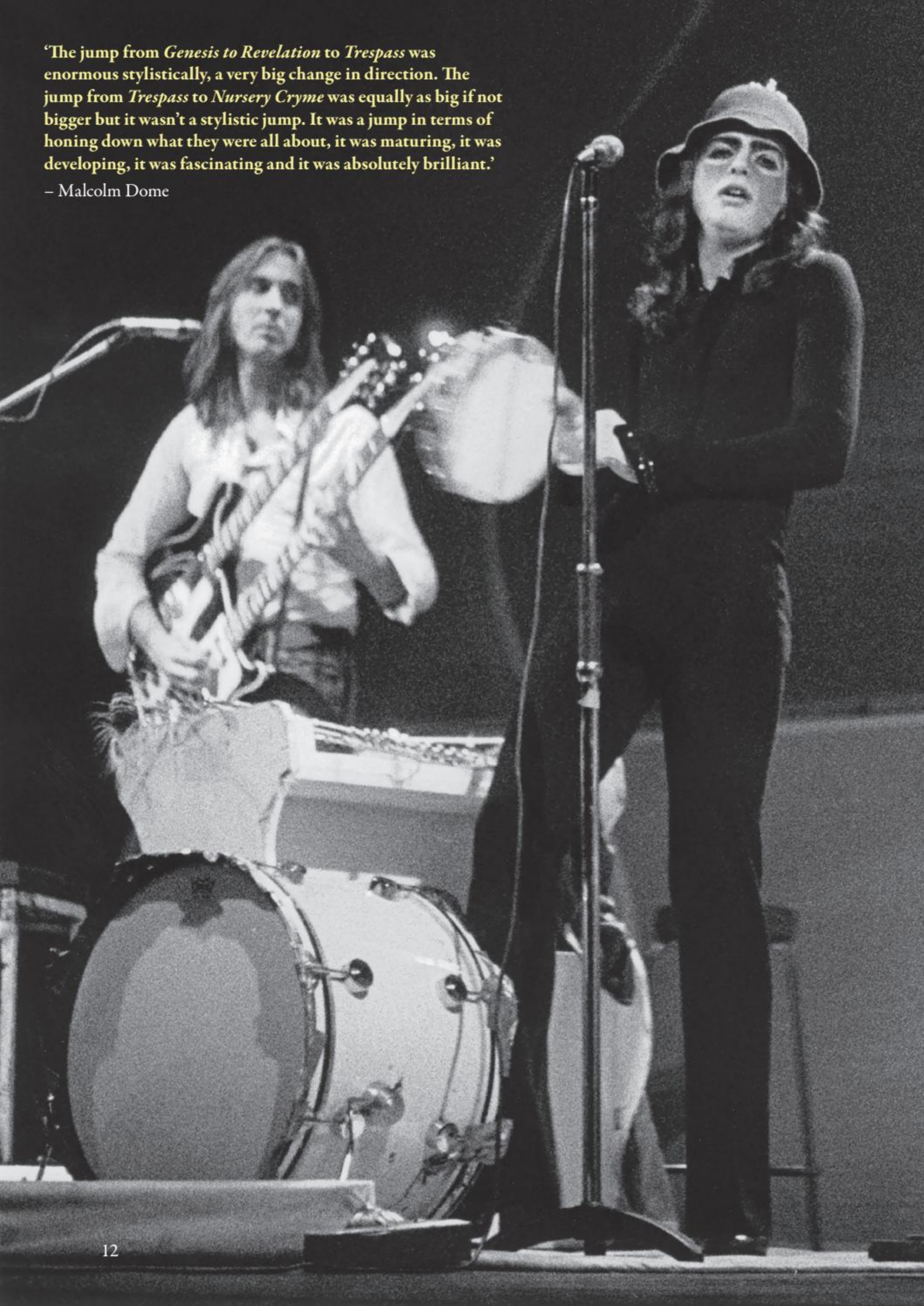
The song became a live favourite during Gabriel's tenure with the band. He first decided on the idea of wearing costumes at a gig in the National Stadium, Dublin in September 1972, leaving during the instrumental break and re-appearing at the conclusion wearing his wife's red dress and a fox's head. Later, he would wear an 'old man' mask for the song's ending, acting out the part of the aged Henry.

Hugh Fielder: Arguably the first real Genesis classic and certainly the strongest track on this album, *The Musical Box* contains within one piece many of the musical stylings the band utilised over the next five years.

The song tells the truly strange story of Henry, a child who dies as a result of having had his head removed by his sister's croquet mallet. Henry then exists in a kind of half-life, brought back to some level of existence when the musical box plays *Old King Cole* only to rapidly age from child to old man, living long enough to suggest a little incest with his sister along the way. This is classic oblique Gabriel storytelling of the kind that culminated in *The Lamb Lies Down on Broadway*.

'The jump from *Genesis to Revelation* to *Trespass* was enormous stylistically, a very big change in direction. The jump from *Trespass* to *Nursery Cryme* was equally as big if not bigger but it wasn't a stylistic jump. It was a jump in terms of honing down what they were all about, it was maturing, it was developing, it was fascinating and it was absolutely brilliant.'

– Malcolm Dome



The Musical Box begins with a gentle introductory twelve-string guitar passage very reminiscent of *Trespass*, and Collins vocal contribution is immediately apparent. Strident twelve-string guitar chords of around three-and-a-half minutes herald the mid section with its galloping rhythm and heavily fuzzed Hackett solo. This is no succession of blues licks but rather a piece of composition in its own right that complements and lifts the music, establishing Hackett's trademark sound in the process.

Rather than just power to the end of the song, the band then take the level right down again at around five minutes while Gabriel recites *Old King Cole* and Banks establishes a beautiful oboe-like theme. When the fast rhythm returns it's with a composed Banks' solo interspersed with hard-edged contributions from Hackett.

Here as much as anywhere, one is aware that Genesis are operating in a totally different musical sphere from their contemporaries: none of the other so-called progressive bands of the era managed to create a sound quite as unique as this. Much is made of the public-school roots of the band but beyond these, and in the non-musical sense, there is a feeling that this music and subject-matter are somehow out of place in 1971 and perhaps belong to an older, more mysterious age.

The pace and volume is taken down one more time at around seven-and-half minutes before the first of many spine-tingling Genesis moments when Banks' cathedral-like organ tones enter just under a minute later. This heralds the closing *Touch Me* section which builds to a magnificent climax, urged on by Gabriel's passionate vocals. It seems not to matter that Gabriel is assuming a persona rather than singing in the first person about love and loss: without the visuals and the costumes he is still able to create the sense in the listener ear's that this truly is a living and breathing character.

Michael Heatley (Journalist and Biographical Author): The *Nursery Cryme* album had many highlights the opening of *The Musical Box* was certainly one, something I certainly remember

about it was Phil Collins taking it by the scruff of the neck and doing a bit of a Keith Moon which John Mayhew the drummer they had before technically didn't have the balls in his drumming to do that, there were a lot of different styles of tones within the one song, which is something that Genesis made a bit of a trademark of, but it is a song that also needs some explaining because if you had come to watch Genesis and you wanted to have a dance or a bop or whatever, *The Musical Box* wasn't something that really gave you the opportunity to do that so instead it was presented as some other kind of entertainment, Peter Gabriel would really have to explain to the people what they were trying to do, some people liked it, some people left, but those who stayed were generally not disappointed.

The Musical Box is very much old Genesis, the mix of twelve-string guitars and keyboards with the keyboards often taking the melody rather than the guitars, which was unusual for groups at that time, it had all the elements that old Genesis fans tended to treasure, it did stay in the set for quite a while, it was as et piece, it was something that they were keen to get over and not something they would put away easily, but yes, it was a highlight of the early Genesis and I would certainly say that the advent of Phil Collins was what made it so special.

Malcolm Dome: To my mind *The Musical Box* is clearly one of the great epics in the history of progressive music and it is so strange, it is the story of two kids playing croquet, male and female, boy, girl, the girl takes hold of her croquet hammer and gracefully knocks off the head of the boy, now you never find out whether this is deliberate or an accident, although I did expect some sort of sexual undertone on this and then the girl retires back to her room, finds the boy's musical box, opens it and it plays *Old King Cole* and up pops the boy in the musical box and ages before her very eyes, it's a very strange story indeed, part Victorian ghost story, part drug trip, although I'm not suggesting Peter Gabriel had taken acid or anything like that, but it

certainly has that element about it. It is a fascinating piece in terms of lyrics and story, pushed by the music which dips and dives, ebbs and flows beautifully.

Chris Welch (Celebrated Music Journalist, Critic and Author): Very few people then before or since could have creased something so intense and so clever, it is a very sophisticated piece of writing, if you listen to it again now, it is remarkable the way it moves forward and tells the story at the same time, it's a piece of dramatic art I suppose. This album was really chocked full of goodies I suppose including *The Musical Box*, which was inspired by Peter Gabriel's father's house, which actually had a large croquet lawn and had all these dark hidden places and a spooky atmosphere to it that Peter remembered as a child. So all that came out in the creation of *The Musical Box*. Once again it was a herculean effort, you had Steve Hackett's interesting little guitar fills, Phil Collins' big band drumming with the group bringing a sense of cohesion to the whole arrangement. Something like that could have become very sprawling and chaotic unless you held it together very tightly, so that's where the drumming is very important on something like that, so it doesn't become just a sprawling mess of solos which it so easily could have been, but instead it is a very tight and well conducted performance, it was a real highlight of that album.

Rob Corich: I think *The Musical Box* was a fantastic track on the album but I don't think it was the actual highlight of the album, the album highlight for me was an album that worked as a complete album in its entirety, not just as individual tracks. Obviously *The Musical Box* was one track that they went on to play live quite regularly and people became very familiar with it, but if you sit down and listen to that album today it is still an extremely good album to sit down and listen to in one go. *The Musical Box* works well because it has lots of little tranquil Genesis parts that only really Genesis

could do, and also the very exciting, vibrant progressive parts; it's a dynamite piece of work.

For Absent Friends

Hugh Fielder: Following the epic opener comes *For Absent Friends,* clocking in at less than two minutes. Although all the Gabriel-era albums share the songwriting credits equally between all band members, this is very similar in style to other whimsical pieces that appeared on Hackett's solo albums. *For Absent Friends* presents a small oasis of normality between the musical and conceptual eccentricities of *Musical Box* and the following *Hogweed*. Instrumentally it stays limited to gentle twelve and six-string acoustic guitars and subtle electric piano. The lyrics, which play like a script for a short film, concerns the simple journey of an old married couple from a deserted park bench to church and then home on the bus.

The Return of the Giant Hogweed

The Return of the Giant Hogweed warns of the spread of the toxic plant Heracleum mantegazzianum after it was 'captured' in Russia and brought to England by a Victorian explorer. Though the real plant is extremely toxic and dangerous, the song's lyrics are a humorous exaggeration, suggesting the plant is attempting to take over the human race. Both *The Musical Box* and *The Return of the Giant Hogweed* feature Hackett's first use of guitar tapping, a technique whereby the index finger of the plucking hand is applied directly to the guitar fret board. The opening to the latter features Hackett and Banks playing triplets in harmony.

Hugh Fielder: Opening with abrasive guitar and keyboard arpeggios, *Hogweed* is another narrative piece, this time telling the tale of Victorian explorers bringing from Russia to Kew Gardens in London a curious plant which then proceeds to threaten the human race, Triffid-style. Not the strongest of Genesis tracks but, like *The*

Musical Box, one that possesses a unique archaic charm thanks to Gabriel's storytelling ability. Where most guitarists would resort to playing rhythm guitar, Hackett plays intelligently composed fuzzed guitar lines that interweave with Banks' keyboards, only resorting to power chords at the climax of the track. Rutherford contributes typically agile bass parts, demonstrating his rapid progression on the instrument since the *Trespass* period.

In fact the bizarre plot of *The Return of the Giant Hogweed* somewhat foreshadowed an actual event, as in 2015 there was alarm in the media at a potential spreading of this deadly plant. As seen here in an uncharacteristically amusing extract from the British newspaper the *Express*.

'The Environment Agency this week warned Britons of the risk posed by the non-native Giant Hogweed, which can cause serious burns, and is spreading across all four corners of the British Isles at an alarming rate.

The plant has left at least six people – including five children – with serious injuries in the last week alone. The agency warned the plant that leaves hideous blisters had colonised the country's river banks and canal paths.

In the track released at the start of the seventies Gabriel shrieks: "Turn and run!/Nothing can stop them, around every river and canal their power is growing."

The release went on to say they were now also thriving in urban areas and cities away from water, which "until recently" were "unaffected by its spread."

But in the next verse Gabriel appears to predict the current problem as he roars: "Stamp them out! We must destroy them, they infiltrate each city with their thick dark warning odour."

The song also warned of the difficulty ridding the country of the invasive weed which can grow a triffid-sized five metres tall, and our inability to develop a defence to its spread.

'When I first joined the band I was viewed as class clown because I was a scapegoat in a way, which is fine because a drummer's role is very defined. It's like a goalkeeper, he is there to really present the vibe, you give the band the energy with the playing on the drums and if you give a bit of humour and personality to that vibe then the band will bounce off it. It's amazing how a bit of humour can divert huge arguments.'

– Phil Collins

The chorus sounds: "They are invincible, They seem immune to all our herbicidal battering."

The song, which has the band's then trademark folky-rock sound and church-organ riffs, correctly told how the weed had arrived here from Russia to Kew Gardens in London before spreading out.

It appears those responsible for combating the ferocious flora missed a trick by not listening to one of the song's suggested ways of dealing with the menace. It is known the plant's toxic sap is only harmful if someone is exposed to it in sunlight. Gabriel told of a ploy to rid them from our shores with nocturnal assaults on the plant. In another line he sings: "Hurry now, we must protect ourselves. Strike by night!/They are defenceless. They all need the sun to photosensitize their venom."

The track suggests the current outbreak is the plant's "revenge" for being removed from their homeland, in the line: "Botanical creature stirs, seeking revenge./Soon they escaped, spreading their seed, preparing for an onslaught, threatening the human race."

Let's just hope the final apparent prediction in the song is not bourne out as Gabriel ends the tune wailing: "Mighty Hogweed is avenged. Human bodies soon will know our anger. Kill them with your Hogweed hairs."

Thankfully the Hogweed crisis was kept under control, and many years later, Britain remains free from its botanically murderous grasp.

Seven Stones

Hugh Fielder: *Seven Stones* offers dark lyrics seemingly concerning the inevitability of fate and the futility of trying to understand or influence the course of events: 'The changes of no consequence will pick up the reins from nowhere'. Heavy stuff with an obscurity that makes you wonder if the writers themselves were really sure what this song is about. Musically the song is less complex than most on the album, taking a fairly straightforward ballad form, albeit a ballad exaggerated by Banks' very classical-sounding organ and Mellotron

string textures at times very reminiscent of King Crimson's debut album.

Harold the Barrel

Hugh Fielder: A quirky, in some ways Beatles-ish, piano-driven tale which somehow manages to combine humour with the story of a suicide in just three minutes. The mood of the piece is probably best summed up by the words of Harold's mother who tells him not to jump from the ledge because 'Your shirt's all dirty and there's a man here from the BBC'. The almost music hall/vaudeville clowning of the Gabriel/Collins vocal team that appeared on later songs such as *The Battle of Epping Forest* makes its debut here with the Collin's faux-cockney accent highly evident.

Harlequin

Hugh Fielder: Gentle twelve-string guitars and vocal harmonies are the order of the day in a song that revisits the sound and mood of *Trespass*. Musically you can hear why, on first impressions, Collins likened the band to Crosby, Stills and Nash. Of course the vocals tell you that this is something quite different, but then so do Banks' keyboards adding textures and flourishes rooted in European music. It's interesting to hear how strongly Collins contributes to the vocals here, very much on an equal footing with Gabriel and more so than on many of the latter songs from this era.

The Fountain of Salmacis

The Fountain of Salmacis tells the Greek myth of Salmacis and Hermaphroditus. It originated from a short passage that Banks had written while at university. The track makes use of the Mellotron, with an influence from King Crimson's *In the Court of the Crimson King*. Banks thought the instrument greatly complemented his piece when combined with the organ. It became the basis for *The Fountain of Salmacis* which was taken further to a complete song as the result

of group jams. Hackett particularly enjoyed the time he came up with his ending guitar solo, which occurred around midnight at Luxford House during a rare moment when the group were up for recording.

Hugh Fielder: It's interesting to note that Fountain Of Salmacis and *The Musical Box*, the two songs that really carry *Nursery Cryme*, both date from the time when Anthony Phillips was still with the band.

Majestic Mellotron string swells and organ arpeggios open proceedings and serve to remind that Banks really did hold the crucial components of the Genesis sound. *Fountain of Salmacis* proceeds to tell the tale, shrouded in Greek mythology, of a hunter who comes upon a lake that turns all who bathe in it into hermaphrodites. Rutherford and Collins provide an inspired rhythm track that manages to combine swing jazz with definitive progressive rock dynamics.

Following the second verse, classic Banks arpeggios give way to a mid section of staccato bass and drum parts overlaid with coruscating runs from Hackett. The lyrical climax of the last verse makes way for a majestic musical climax topped by Hackett's precise lead guitar. The song and album finishes with a final 'orchestral' chord and one is left with the impression that even if the Genesis recipe wasn't quite perfected on this album, all of the ingredients were certainly now in place.

Pip Williams (Veteran Record Producer, Arranger and Guitarist): Probably the highlight track is *The Fountain of Salmacis* which is about the legend of Hermaphroditus, the two sexed mythical character, Steve Hackett played some great guitar on this after about three minutes of the track and this was his highlight of the album if you like, again more Mellotron, some jazzy stuff here and there but this hinted at some of the later epics that were to come in later albums and it remains a favourite with some of the early Genesis fans.

Michael Heatley: Tony Banks called a song like *The Fountain of Salmacis* an odyssey rather than a song, a story that went from A to B. Live, people weren't necessarily sure where it was going to go and people weren't necessarily sure where it ended up, as it could be a little different each night when they were playing it on stage. It's interesting; it is a song that Tony Tyler of the *New York Express* honed in on because he called it 'the kind of drama that is international'.

◊

THE COVER

The album's sleeve was designed and illustrated by Paul Whitehead who had also designed the cover for *Trespass* and the band's next album, *Foxtrot*. The cover depicts characters and scenes based on *The Musical Box* and *Coxhill*, the manor house with a croquet lawn, itself based on the Victorian home Gabriel grew up in. When the group originally saw Whitehead's painting, they said it didn't look old enough, so he varnished it with honey which made it look like it was an antique from the Nineteenth Century. When originally released, the cover shocked some people, because of the severed heads pictured on it.

The inner sleeve resembled an old photo album, with a panel for each song along with an illustrated picture. Whitehead later picked his design for *Nursery Cryme* as his favourite of the three done for Genesis, noting: 'It just works very well with the music. It fits perfect. It's the right colour, the right vibe'.

Whitehead relayed the creation of the classic cover in conversation with Malcolm Dome of Team Rock stating that he first met the band when 'I had an art exhibition in London, and either Peter Gabriel came to see it, or the band's producer John Anthony did. I can't now recall which way round it was. But as a result I ended up being asked to do the cover for *Trespass*, and it went from there.

'I always insist on hearing as much music as I can before doing the artwork. I have to get a feel for the way it all sounds. I was given the lyrics beforehand, and heard some of the music, although it wasn't finished at that stage. But I really liked what I got played. They were developing their own style, and sounded like nothing else around at the time.'

'The album seemed to me to have a very Victorian feel to it. And that's what I pursued. The guys liked the idea, and told me to run with it.'

'One of the tracks I certainly heard was *The Musical Box*, and it was from there that I came up with the idea of using an *Alice in Wonderland* theme for the cover. It fitted in with the old England lyrical approach. But the problem we had was that the band wanted it to look like an old painting.

'When I showed them my original painting, they all said that it didn't look old enough. They wanted it to look like it came from the Victorian era. So, I varnished the canvas with old honey, and that did the trick. It now had that Nineteenth Century feel to it. But the problem was that when this was sent off to be printed, the first proof which came back had given the painting a yellow hue, which wasn't supposed to be there. However, we all liked it so much that it was decided to stick with this.'

'The band really liked [the cover]. They thought it captured the spirit of the music. And Charisma Records were also very pleased with what they saw, as were the management. But the fan reaction was interesting. There were people who were genuinely shocked at what they saw on the cover. You can imagine what it was like in those days for the unsuspecting record browser. They would be going through the racks in their local record store when they'd be confronted by this image! It created quite a stir back then. Of course, this was before the slasher movies became popular. Now, the cover wouldn't get that sort of reaction at all. But in 1971, it was really seen as being controversial. All those heads on a croquet lawn. It's odd, because at the time I never painted this for any other reason than to represent the music. I had no clue it would be so contentious.'

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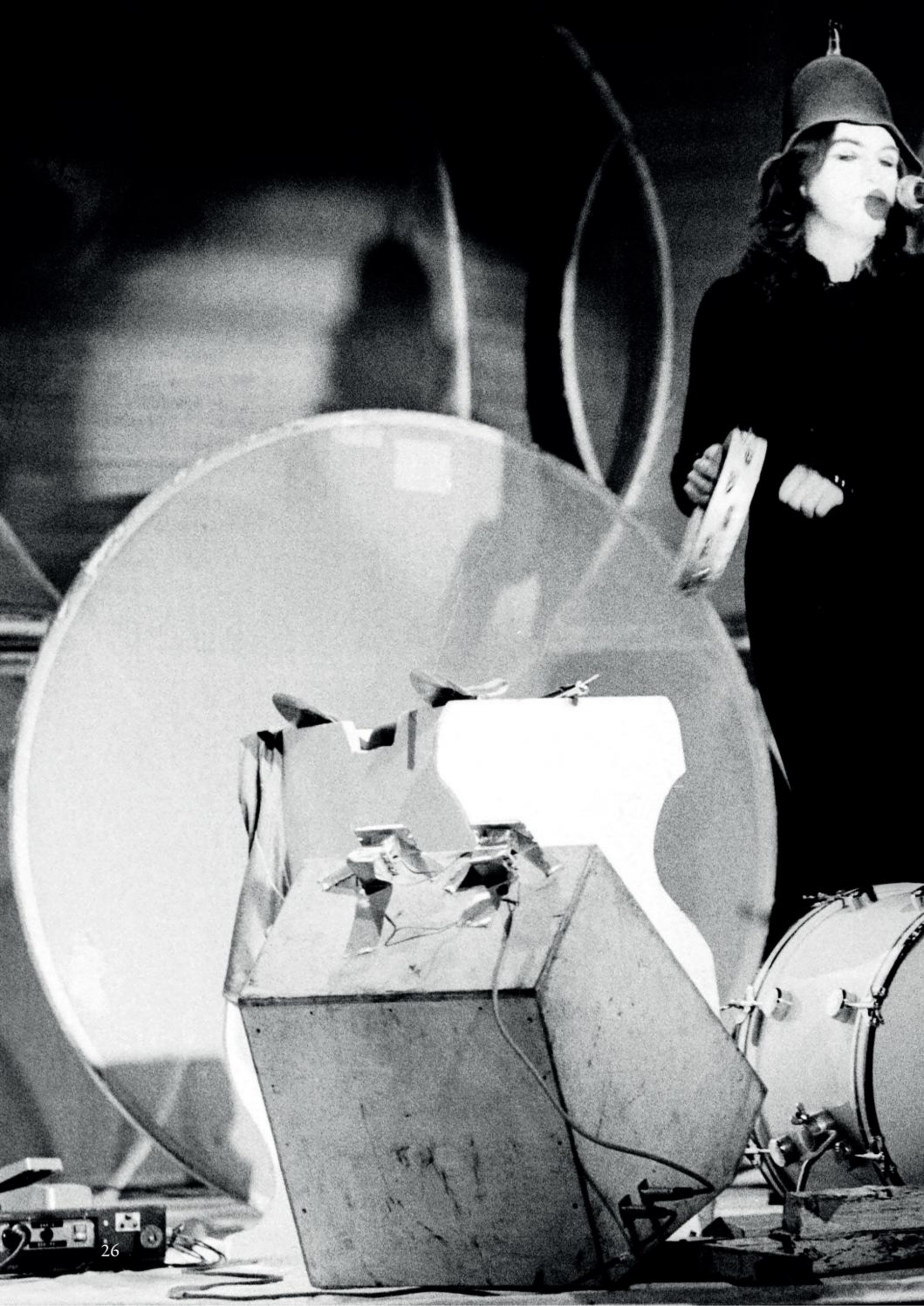
The new album certainly cemented the potential many had seen within the group, and one benefit of their growing profile was the fact that the band were now capable of reaching a much wider media, including the hugely influential *Rolling Stone* magazine. Richard Cromelin's review of the album for *Rolling Stone* was published on 26 October 1972. It is interesting to note that even at this early stage the album and its inspired presentation had little difficulty in winning over a newcomer to the music. Mr Cromelin however harboured some serious concerns over the production of the album:

'The countryside cottage in which (it says here) Genesis regrouped their creative energies must have had a lot of strange stuff coming out of the walls to have been worthy of hosting this new contender for the coveted British weirdo-rock championship. The cover of *Nursery Cryme* is a De Chirico-like painting of a croquet field littered with Surrealist paraphernalia. At stage centre stands a large-eyed Alice sort, her mallet raised to poke through the wicket one of



'Something definitely changed when Phil joined the band. He was a real drummer – something I had never been too convinced of with Chris Stewart and John Mayhew.'

– Peter Gabriel

the disembodied heads that lie scattered about. Paul Whitehead's painting was inspired by *The Musical Box*, the album's opener: playing croquet, Cynthia gracefully lops off Henry's head; two weeks later a tiny Henry makes an appearance in his music box, and his body begins ageing rapidly; "a lifetime of desires" surges through him, desires that Cynthia will be no party to; the nurse enters and hurls the music box at the bearded child, "destroying both".

OK? Well, with the exception of *The Return of the Giant Hogweed*, the rest of it isn't quite that bizarre. *Harold the Barrel* and *For Absent Friends* are observations of British life and characters that remind (in theme if not quality) of the Kinks; *Seven Stones* and *Harlequin* are vaguely poetic and impressionistic, and *The Fountain of Salmacis* relates the myth of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in a straightforward manner.

Nursery Cryme's main problem lies not in Genesis' concepts, which are, if nothing else, outrageously imaginative and lovably eccentric, nor with their musical structures – long, involved, multi-movemented frameworks on which they hang their narratives – nor even with their playing, which does get pretty lethargic at points. It's the god-awful production, a murky, distant stew that at best bubbles quietly when what is desperately needed are the explosions of drums and guitars, the screaming of the organ, the abrasive rasp of vocal cords. It might really be there, and at times you can actually detect a genuine electricity in their music (which lies roughly within the territory staked out by Yes, Strawbs and Family, with a touch of Procol Harum). It could be simply a matter of taking off the lid.

Some numbers, including *The Musical Box*, survive even under this handicap. *Harold the Barrel* moves well and features lots of enjoyable musical ideas and some fine lines. *Salmacis* swims about in a nicely drawn atmosphere and is a good example of Genesis' refusal to indulge in gratuitous eclecticism at the expense of rock 'n' roll. And *Hogweed*, while perhaps a bit stilted, is admirably ambitious and uses its excessive wordiness to humorous advantage.

It's definitely a type of music that skulks down back alleys far from the beaten path, but if Genesis (which consists of Tony Banks, Michael Rutherford, Peter Gabriel, Steve Hackett and Phil Collins) learn how to gear things up to explosion level and manage to develop their ideas a bit more thoroughly, they could be the ones to successfully repopulate those forgotten passages.'

Fortunately not all reviewers focussed so resolutely on the negative aspects of the latest Genesis offering. This piece by Ron Ross is extracted from a much longer article entitled 'Genesis: The Future of Rock Theatre' which appeared in *Phonographic Record* in 1975. This is much more typical of the bulk of music writing around this time which was overwhelmingly sympathetic to what the band were trying to achieve.

'At any rate, without any pretentious claims that it was a concept album, *Nursery Cryme* was a masterfully conceived and executed whole. Genesis did not attempt to recreate the musical style of the Victorian era, but rather to convey its obsession with mythology, croquet, romanticism and repressed sexuality by building moods around fantastic stories. Along with *The Musical Box* were *Harold the Barrel*, a funny little tale of suicide; *The Return of the Giant Hogweed*, about a killer growth transplanted to England where it takes it revenge by ravaging the countryside; and *The Fountain of Salmacis*, in which Banks' mesmerising Mellotron introduces a Greek myth whereby the demi-god Hermaphrodite becomes one with the water-nymph Salmacis. At the song's climax he curses her "shimmering lake" after he becomes the first man-woman. As trendy for 1971 as Bowie's *Hunky Dory*, *Nursery Cryme*'s dealings with sexual confusion were simultaneously more sensational and less sensationalistic.'

Although sales of *Trespass* had improved upon those of its predecessor by a factor of ten, Genesis were disappointed to see that there was no corresponding leap with the release of *Nursery Cryme*. The album represented a huge leap forward in creative terms but commercially things were still very slow, with initial sales still around

the 6000 mark indicating that despite playing better, working harder and gaining much more exposure, the band had made absolutely no progress in the market place. It was a bitter pill to swallow but in retrospect the blame for the disappointing sales can't be laid at the feet of *Nursery Cryme,* which was and still is a brilliant piece of work. Maybe Genesis could have done with the support of Barbara Charone at *NME* who was again able to review the *Nursery Cryme* album only in retrospect for this 1974 piece:

'With the personnel changes came another album, *Nursery Cryme*, a marked improvement from past efforts, heralding a more majestic group sound. Stubbornly, the band stuck to original concepts, and aided by better musical technicians came up with one of their finest albums. This crucial album marked the beginning of several important changes and musical growth. Genesis began to mature. At the same time, the group began experimenting with concert production.'

In the course of their extended interview with Barbara, the band were forced, not for the last time, to explain the band's disinterest in the benefits of mind expanding drugs, as Phil Collins mused:

'After a gig in Cambridge a guy came up to us and said it was obvious that after *Trespass* we all took acid. They said the album saved their lives. People do get weird impressions. Even now, people just sort of stare when we come out of the stage door, expecting to see me holding some amazing religious book under my arms!'

Rutherford echoed Collins' impressions with much amusement. 'People are convinced that we moved from ordinary dope to acid from *Trespass* to *Nursery Cryme*'. Yet Genesis were hardly the tripped-out messiahs their public envisioned. While other groups received chemical inspiration, Genesis resorted to plain old creativity. 'I think I disappoint people that I don't do drugs,' said Gabriel referring to the rock star mystique that thrives on the pleasure principle. 'A small glass of milk is the most potent thing I do. I had a talk with someone once who was convinced that I was the angel

of the annunciation. I gently lowered myself in their esteem. There's nothing like a good nose-pick for removing immortality.'

Humour remained an integral part of the Genesis world. On and off stage, in conversation and satirical song introductions and in lyrical content, the band began to advocate an infectious off-the-wall sentiment which added greatly to the fantasy. With *Nursery Cryme* Gabriel began to perfect his wry penchant for far-fetched lyrics owing more to rhyme schemes than philosophical ramblings. Even Peter Gabriel's then-wife admitted to never knowing just exactly what *Harold the Barrel* was all about, aided by the fact that onstage Gabriel began to develop an entertaining but garbled vocal delivery.

'I'm a great believer in mumble-jumble sense,' Peter admits. 'I prefer things that give an air of meaning rather than meaning itself. You can't look for meaning in some of the lyrics, they just present an atmosphere.'

Yet it was this atmosphere that began to make Genesis tick. While the band played a movie soundtrack, Gabriel began to project a cinematic scenario. In the beginning he would mime in improvised fashion to more storybook lyrics, but as a concrete story line began to emerge, the visuals became more clearly defined. In the wake of the release of *Nursery Cryme* the band took another tilt at the singles charts with the release of the single *Happy the Man*. As with all of their previous singles this one too was to prove a flop, but it did provide the impetus for more press coverage which in the hands of allies like Chris Welch was increasingly positive even where the material wasn't the strongest. In this extended interview published in *Melody Maker* on 15 July 1972 Chris proved a sympathetic supporter for the fast maturing Genesis:

'Peter Gabriel is a quiet and nervous chap. He sits twisting his hands while his eyes bore from a high forehead that might indicate supreme intelligence, or is simply the result of shaving part of his scalp. He ponders a while then out comes a rush of sentences, a message to the outer world. Get it down quickly, because

transmission may suddenly cease and Peter will be winding himself up inside again. "Try beer" I suggested "It helps you relax." Peter shook his head. "Coke" he said faintly. "I'll have a Coke." Not bad going, because Peter, the flute player who will take on a motley audience with menacing verbiage, had thrice refused refreshments, even while his fellow musicians were gladly absorbing lager.

It never ceases to surprise that the most extrovert characters on stage prove to be mild mannered, gentle souls away from the glare of footlights and strobe. There was Jimi Hendrix, P. J. Proby Arthur Brown, Keith Emerson, all a blur of flaming guitars, ripping trousers, blazing helmets and flashing knives whilst on public display. But behind the scenes just plain old world courtesy every time.

And Peter Gabriel, who can hold an audience with hypnotic ease and launch into the most powerful flights of fantasy, has none of the brashness normally associated with the hard gigging rock musician. Peter and Genesis have come a long way since their debut album under the auspices of Jonathan King who produced them back in the dark ages. Their music and attitudes have changed, improved, and progressed until they have reached that most exciting time for all groups, when they haven't quite cracked the publicity barrier, but are enjoying the much more worthwhile and rewarding acclaim of genuinely appreciative audiences

For Genesis have their fans who know about the music, and the lyrics and the act, and plot their course through the clubs and corn exchanges. They cheer when Peter launches into a brief resume of the plot of *Musical Box*, one of their most emotive pieces. And they leap to applaud when the lights explode to the music with brilliant timing. What struck me most about the band, after not having seen them for a year or so, was the strange aura they managed to sustain even within the municipal confines of the Watford Town Hall. They seem to be super relaxed, or floating which probably stems from the habit of the guitarists in sitting down to play. Even delays between

numbers do not seem to matter. The audience knows the next piece will be equally good, if not make listeners restless.

The strongest interplay seems to come between their remarkable drummer Phil Collins and Gabriel, probably because Phil has a strong personality and Peter used to be a drummer. In fact Pete still hangs on to a solitary bass drum which he raps from time to time, between singing and fluting. The feeling and excitement of a band that is happening musically, and knows it, is only rarely experienced. It happened for Led Zeppelin, The Nice, Jethro Tull and a few others when they were just starting out as support bands or local club attractions.

That feeling is happening now with Genesis although they are not entirely convinced that success is just around the corner. How do they feel about "success," how will the band evolve? And how do they feel about such contemporaries as Alice Cooper and David Bowie? Peter, Phil and guitarist Steve Hackett assembled to talk this week in London just prior to a lightning assault on Holland.

"Yes, our style has changed a lot, evolved in the last year," said Peter, sinking onto an uncomfortable stool and wobbling slightly. It changed when Phil came along and Steve joined on guitar. And it will change again, because we will be doing all new stuff for our next album. It's the only time we can get to write when we work on an album. We hope to have a new show by January which will be a complete musical presentation."

Said Phil: "We'll be using back projection with a big screen behind us. What we've got at the moment is very basic as far as lights go. A lot of light shows are just rubbish, with pretty patterns playing on the band. We went through a period when one of our roadies left us and the lights just didn't happen. It was bad karma. But with lights anything dramatic that helps the music is valid."

Peter began to muse. "Originally we tried to do folk type numbers, and it's all worked up to a crescendo. Now we've got an act, we've started to take control of the audiences. In the past, we bodged our

Released on 2 November 1971, Genesis' third studio album *Nursery Cryme* was the band's first album to feature drummer/vocalist Phil Collins and guitarist Steve Hackett.

Left to right: Tony Banks, Peter Gabriel, Mike Rutherford, Steve Hackett and Phil Collins.

way through things. I suppose it started for us at the legendary Friars, Aylesbury. That's where people first got to know us. It's all built up mostly through gigs rather than publicity. People seem to know our numbers, and those who dislike our music the first time, pick up on us later."

Happy The Man was their last single release, and it didn't knock me out. But after hearing it live, it's a song I constantly whistle, in tuneless fashion. Said Phil: "It was hard to get across on a single in three minutes what the band is all about."

So what is the band all about?

"I don't consciously think about it all as an act," says Peter, whose stage movements have a balletic quality that could earn him an audition at Covent Garden. "A lot of it is based on fantasies, without them taking over from the music. There is a lot of freedom in the music. Nobody has to compromise too much. In our writing we are trying to do something that hasn't been done before, and that is to write a combination of sections that match."

"We have a number called *Musical Box,* that is composed in this way. It's quite a complicated story about a spirit that returns to bodily form and meets a Victorian girl. He has the appearance of an old man and the relations with the young lady are somewhat perverted, so he gets bumped off into the never-never."

Who's the leader of the group? Peter?

"No! We just squabble. We have a democratic system. There are five in the group and three represents a majority. When we are on stage we really feel the energy coming off man." Peter laughed. "That sounds American. The energy flows in and we push it out. We need success to get the band into the next stage. And anyway, the band is fourteen thousand pounds in the red at the moment."

Despite Chris Welch's best efforts on the promotion front *Happy The Man* disappeared pretty much without trace, and in its original vinyl form is now a highly sought after collector's item. In spite of the lack

of action in the singles chart, the band's reputation in the live arena continued to grow and by 1972 the group was even beginning to feature in *Record Mirror* magazine. Always viewed as the poor relation of the music press, *Record Mirror* displayed a marked affection for pop music rather than serious music, as purveyed by Genesis and their ilk, but by 1972 the Genesis phenomenon had grown so strong that even *Record Mirror* had to acknowledge the band, albeit with this short and rather half hearted Gabriel interview from 1972:

'A particular quality of certain successful groups has been their ability to create moods, to take an audience a little further than the surface excitement of an insistent rock beat. Their entire performance is calculated to one end, to grab and disturb listeners, to play upon their emotions. Genesis are such a band, and as a result of abundant ideas and novel approach they have gained an almost fanatical following, who enjoy the jokes, delight in the particularly perverse.

How did Peter explain their appeal?

"It was the flights of imagination and the lyrics probably at first. Now it's a bit different as we have a more extreme stage act. It's all been there for two years, but we have tried to improve on it." Peter emphasised that the ideas in the band came from each member; "they're not all mine you know, it's a very democratic system." Part of their development has been an increasingly clever use of lighting in the desire to make their show visually exciting. "We have a fairly integrated light show that relates more to the music than most. Lights are often trimmings and they get in the way of the band. They don't convey the different moods with different colours." But Genesis plan to change all that. "We're going to get two light towers, two on stage and two in the audience. And we want a white circular backcloth. It's a pet idea of mine to have a semi-circular backcloth which will hopefully give us a large reflective sun."

How close are Genesis to their audiences?

"We had a great night at Aylesbury recently when we asked the audience to boo instead of cheer. Then last night we played at

Greenford and it was easy to recognise the Aylesbury contingent because they were really abusive. They really are a great audience! They like the concept of our music and we like people to like us it's very simple. We like to create a moody, dream-like quality in the music, and we use our stage act to enhance the moods. —-We don't appear to have much humour but there are things we laugh at and we are putting more humour and more subversion into the music. There is an element of escapism in it, but there is nothing to do with the drug culture, which I don't like. We should be able to create and sustain moods on a natural level. I don't think drug-induced states are valuable. Sometimes we like to say that the audience enjoys the music, but really the music enjoys the audience. Personally I like to see any response that people want to give. If people want to dance they can. I think that's great. On the whole, people are inhibited, myself included, any expression to music is pleasure. Genesis brings express relief. Well it works for me; I can get completely engrossed in the music. Rhythm for the body, and stuff for the mind. The power of music is unlimited. In the future music will be used to heal, whereas now it often makes people sick."

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By the beginning of 1972 Genesis could have been forgiven for thinking that they would never achieve success with their unique brand of progressive rock. Despite all of their best creative efforts *Nursery Cryme* seemed to have been received less warmly in the market than *Trespass*, at least in the UK. Faced with a sales graph that remained resolutely flat the band stepped up their efforts on the live front and in an effort to gain recognition were playing up to five nights a week in small venues up and down the UK.

A measure of salvation came in the form of some news which arrived at last from Charisma. Genesis were delighted to be informed of keen European interest in the group and rising record sales with

high chart positions for both albums in Belgium and Italy. This new interest served to bolster the band's enthusiasm in the face of mounting debt and general indifference in the UK, where the group appeared to count for little outside of the 6,000 regular supporters who had avidly bought up *Trespass* and *Nursery Cryme*.

It is something of a cliché to describe albums as being 'make or break' but there was certainly an element of that in relation to the band's next album *Foxtrot*.

Join us in the next issue of Music Legends Special Editions, as Genesis re-enter the studio at a decisive moment in their career and continue their journey into the annals of rock history.

GENESIS

NURSERY CRYME

MUSIC LEGENDS